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ABSTRACT

The systematic, practical ideas presented for improving the quality of life in a community are based on the belief that people, working together, sometimes with and through local government and sometimes through the vigorous efforts of voluntary organizations and associations, can help their communities increasingly become the kinds of places that approach the ideals they set for communities. The recommended process of community development begins with a community needs assessment, proceeds to an examination of potential local and nonlocal sources of support, plans for carrying the actions to completion, and, finally, considers when, why, and how to evaluate the entire activity. The needs assessment phase involves getting ready, conducting a survey, examining and reporting the results, and deciding what action to take among the alternatives discovered. Inventorying and recruiting resources should begin locally, use the expertise of consultants as necessary, and explore applicable state, regional, national, and international sources. Implementation requires avoiding people and communication problems, keeping the activity going, maximizing the action plan, and "fighting fires." Successful evaluation (whether formative or summative) depends more upon clear, accurate, common-sense thinking than upon highly sophisticated techniques, although there is a place for advanced evaluative research methods and analysis. (NEC)

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A fresh, down-to-earth, and systematic collection of practical ideas you can use to improve the quality of life in your community

A CITIZEN'S GUIDE TO COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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A CITIZEN'S GUIDE TO COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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FOREWORD

How often have you heard people make statements like the following about problems in your community?

"This town never seems to show any community spirit."
"I wish this community had . . . [a park, a youth center, a better library, a hospital, or _____]."
"Something ought to be done about . . . [pollution, parking problems, the appearance of our downtown area, or _____]."

The fact that you are reading this guide is evidence that you are *not* the kind of person who would make such statements and then "let George do it." This publication, in fact, is intended particularly for people like you, people who really want to make their community the sort of place they are proud to live in.

The ideas presented here are based on the firm belief that people, working together, sometimes with and through local government and sometimes through the vigorous efforts of voluntary organizations and associations, can help their communities become ever increasingly the kinds of places that approach the ideals they set for communities.

This publication is dedicated, not to professionals or to nationally known leaders in community development thinking or practice, but to you, the reader and user. It is the sincere hope of the author, and the sponsoring organization, the Community Development Division of the National University Extension Association, that you will find what is written here to be understandable, persuasive, and practical.

This is one of a series of publications on community development prepared by members of the Community Development Division of the National University Extension Association. The authors of *A Citizen's Guide . . .* have all had extensive experience in consulting and working with citizen groups as they have undertaken systematic efforts to improve the quality of life in many communities. Institutional identification of each of the authors appears below. Special acknowledgment should be given to Nancy Gendell, editor in the Institute for Community Development and Services at Michigan State University. The clarity and readability of this guide owe much to her thoroughgoing, comprehensive, and knowledgeable modifications of the style and content of the original manuscript.

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CHAPTER 1

OVERVIEW: THE GUIDE AND HOW TO USE IT

We have called this publication a guide because we trust it will be exactly that—a down-to-earth, practical, and systematic collection of ideas about steps that can be taken by people to improve their communities. Some of the suggestions you will find here may seem obvious; others may already be known to you. Fine! They can then serve as reminders—things to be sure to remember to do. Congratulate yourself and read on, for we are confident that other suggestions—we hope many of them—will be fresh, novel, and useful.

Before we comment further on ways in which this guide can be used, however, you may find it helpful if we indicate what we mean by "community" and "community development."

WHAT IS THE "COMMUNITY" YOU WANT TO DEVELOP—TO IMPROVE?

We may as well start with the understanding that there is no clear-cut, agreed-upon definition of a "community." But most people have a notion about—a feeling for—the idea of community, and it usually involves people who are living in a particular geographical area and are bound together with a sense of belonging to that common area. "Living in" and "belonging" usually mean not only residing in adjacent or nearby residences but also carrying out many of the organized activities important to day-to-day living—in schools, churches, jobs, and other activities—within this geographical area. It is these organized activities that play a major role in bringing people together into the settlements we refer to as communities—multiple needs are better and more conveniently served if people live in clusters rather than in spatially scattered homes.

In other words, our interdependence as human beings leads to a recognition of the convenience and economy to be obtained by living near others. And the "boundaries" of communities, in this sense, *may*, but usually do *not*, coincide with political boundaries—they may be wider or narrower.

It is important, then, to have in mind just which particular "community" is the focus of your concern.

WHAT DOES "COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT" MEAN?

The dictionary tells us that "to develop" means to expand or realize potentialities, to bring gradually to a more evolved or better condition. Thus, in *community* development we are considering ways of improving the quality of life for residents—ways of bringing the community to a "better condition." As viewed by most practitioners of community development, however, it involves some special elements that you should keep in mind if you wish to carry out a community development project or program of lasting benefit. These elements include the following:

1. Initiative and leadership should preferably come from *within* the community. (This means that *you* and other individuals and organizations who share a common interest in improving your community should be responsible for formulating and carrying out the project.)
2. Serious attempts should be made to maximize the number of people and organizations in the activity. (Although this can be time-consuming, requires extensive "educational" effort, and may even mean some modification in, or compromise regarding, the program or project, it usually pays off in wider support, more hands to help with the task, and an enhanced sense of community on the part of all.)
3. Local resources (human, physical, and financial) should be used to the fullest extent possible, but outside help should be sought whenever it seems necessary and appropriate. (Thinking of resources in that order increases the likelihood of achieving autonomy in *what* you are going to do in your community and *how* you are going to do it, rather than of having outsiders play the major role in determining your objectives and methods.)

Community development, then, is first of all a *product*—something that improves some specific aspect of your community. Put in a larger context it is also a *process* toward the broader community goal of an enhanced sense of community and an increased satisfaction from participating in a joint activity. And even if you set your sights on the latter, broader goal, you'll need to take into account the shorter range too—the immediate product or products—for the eventual goal is reached through step-by-step projects.

SO, WHAT DO YOU WANT TO DO TO "DEVELOP" YOUR COMMUNITY?

If you don't know what you want to do to improve your community but feel an urge to do *something*, you will find the next chapter very useful. It is entitled "If You Want to Do a Needs Assessment" and presents ideas for finding out, by means of a survey, what the people of your community consider to be problems that should be addressed.

And *if you do know* what you want to do, read the chapter anyway! At the very least, it may make you decide to follow the procedure suggested there in order to get an idea of how widely your concern is shared as compared with other problems people see in your community. You might even decide to work first on what might be called the "most popular problem" rather than the one *you* believe has greatest priority. And if you persist in pushing your particular project, at least you will know what your

handicap is and how much effort you'll have to make in order to convince ("educate") people of the importance of your project.

In any event, don't try to do it alone. You'll be much more likely to achieve your goal, and certainly much more likely to achieve the broader ends of community development, if you work through organizations to elicit interest and help. If all else fails, you may have to *build* an organization that will commit itself to your project. If the organization you have, or build, is a single-purpose one—that is, one dedicated to a specific concern (e.g., economic development committee, mental health association, friends of the library, etc.)—it is important to determine how your goals relate to those of other groups in your community. Out of this knowledge it is possible to build coalitions to work on common problems, or at least to determine the order in which problems should be addressed.

THE ORGANIZATION OF THIS GUIDE

In this guide we have attempted to describe the step-by-step process through which community development projects can be carried out, beginning with a discussion of a community "needs assessment" and proceeding from that to an examination of potential local and nonlocal sources of support, a discussion of how to plan the action and carry it through to completion, and finally (of great significance but too often overlooked) a consideration of when, why, and how to evaluate the entire activity.

We suggest that you begin by reading the guide through in its entirety. We recommend this because the steps, though they are divided into separate chapters, all are interrelated. What you do at one step can have consequences—sometimes unintended ones—for what you need to do later. Thus it is well to see the totality before you begin. You can then use, or adapt, what we have said here to carry out what we hope will be successful steps toward the development of your community.

CHAPTER 2

IF YOU WANT TO DO A NEEDS ASSESSMENT

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We have already suggested that you may not *want* to do a needs assessment; you may belong to a single-purpose organization dedicated to a single type of community problem. Or you may not *need* a community needs assessment; the problem may be staring you and everyone else in the face, and the "need" is to do something about it.

But if yours is a general "service" organization, one that is interested in carrying out any one of a number of kinds of community development projects, you should certainly consider starting with some kind of systematic study of what the community *needs* that your organization might be in a position to address.

One of the easiest ways to conduct a needs assessment is to hire someone or a firm to do it for you. Most people working on a community development project don't have the money to do this, however; so they have to do it themselves. This is often fortunate, because, though it takes much time and energy for people to do it themselves, they often gain more than they would if it were done for them and handed to them. This chapter is offered as a guide, or really a list of questions to think about, for people and groups who intend to conduct their own assessment or survey.

Before we get too far into the questions, we want to point out that while there may be technical and precise definitions for "survey," "assessment," and "needs and/or resource identification," we have no intention of dealing with those kinds of definitions here. We shall use the terms interchangeably and try to focus our attention on understanding what you may want to do, how you can do it, and what you might do about it when the assessment is finished.

Gathering information is one part of any assessment or survey. You can either ask people, or examine data, or observe the situation. *Asking* can be done by mail, phones, door-to-door canvassing, and radio and TV. *Examining* involves looking at records, such as those in hospitals, schools, police departments, and government agencies. *Observing* means looking at conditions in the community—vacant homes, high-rise apartments, vacant stores, number of parks, etc. Each of these can be a way of gathering the information you want.

The reason for gathering this information, of course, is to help you make better decisions regarding the community problem to which you may wish to address your energies. Our goal here is to provide you with some questions, ideas, and problems to consider. There are no absolute "right" answers or "right" ways to proceed. We offer no formulas or recipes. The decisions you make and the ways you proceed must be determined in light of your own

community—its problems, needs, history, and goals. Thus, *you* are the expert because you alone have the information in depth about your community. It is this element that gives you the big advantage over anyone from outside your community. But you also need confidence, and it is our hope that what you read here will help you to gain it.

We usually think of assessments as having four parts, or phases. All four are important, but we will put much of our emphasis here on the first one, since that is the point at which many well-intentioned efforts to assess needs can bog down. But try to see all four phases as a totality, since your ideas and expectations regarding them can (and should) affect your decisions regarding phase one. The four phases are: (1) getting ready, (2) conducting the survey, (3) examining and reporting the results, and (4) deciding what action to take among the alternatives discovered.

GETTING READY

Without doubt, this is the most critical phase of an assessment. Individuals and groups rarely take the time to plan and identify resources and consider possible problems that may arise along the way. We urge you to overcome the tendency to "rush into it." Be prepared to take the time to plan the entire assessment carefully. The following questions are offered for possible consideration. (Some of them, it should be noted, deserve to be asked over again at later stages in the total process of carrying out a community development project or program.)

What are you really trying to accomplish?

What is the real purpose of the survey? Do you already "know" or suspect what you are going to find out? Or are you seriously trying to determine what is, or at least what the community *sees* as "what is"? Don't be alarmed if you find that you and your group are not too sure of what you are trying to determine, or that people have very different ideas. (In fact, if you are all in complete agreement on the topic, you may consider yours a rare group.) Sometimes answering the two following questions helps individuals and groups come to an agreement on the real purpose of a survey.

What do you want out of it personally?

There are many different reasons why people get involved. Sometimes it's because it gives us a chance to work with some people with whom we enjoy associating. Sometimes we simply think that *somebody* has to do the job. A gain in prestige or status, or even a promotion, is a possible outcome that may attract some of us. We can see the task as very important, or we can simply want to be active. Oftentimes we get involved just because someone we know, like, or respect asks us to! Whatever our reasons are, they are our own and they're O.K., as long as we are not destructive of others. Why we want to do it is not nearly as important as *how* we do it. In fact, knowing (or hoping) that we may gain personally often helps us do a better job.

What about your group?

In the first place, do you *have* a group? Many assessments and community development projects are started in the mind of, and by the efforts of, a single individual. But none of them get very far, as we pointed out earlier, without the combined efforts of a group, club, organization, or agency. If you are working as an individual, you may wish to skip to the sections below on "Who else is interested?" and "Do you want to broaden the base?" After your group is developed, you may wish to return to this section.

Just as each member may have some personal goals or ambitions regarding the survey, the organization as a whole should be aware of what it is trying to accomplish and what the group or organization may gain by conducting the assessment. As a note of caution, occasionally an organization "gains" a lot of anger or resentment from stirring things up. So you should also consider the question "If we're successful, what will happen to our organization?"

Besides "What will happen to the organization?" a more critical question that should be asked is "What will the group be willing to do as a result of the assessment?" Finding out what is needed is important, but the group should be prepared to do something about it. One of the reasons some people are reluctant to respond to surveys is that they're tired of being asked questions when nothing comes of it afterward. They need to be assured, and *shown*, that something will happen because they shared their time and thoughts.

What are you willing to do?

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If your organization is one that restricts its activities to one project a year, you may decide to restrict your survey to that project area. However, if your group is interested in, and willing to broach, new areas of need, you may wish to study a number of problem areas. The important considerations are what your group wants to know, hopes to gain, and is willing to do. Building a survey is much easier if these questions are answered in advance.

Who else is interested?

It is quite possible that there are individuals and organizations who are interested in the same type of assessment as you; in fact, some of them may already have done something about it. Ministerial associations, neighborhood associations, government agencies, fraternal organizations, and social service organizations usually are vitally interested in community development, and one or another of them may have already conducted community needs assessments.

These groups and organizations can provide much information concerning what has taken place as well as point out some local pitfalls. Equally important, they may become a source of cooperation in planning and conducting the assessment. If they are interested in your project, they may supply help. Asking them for information and assistance not only increases communication but can lead to cooperative efforts in community problem solving.

Further, you may by this action take some major steps toward avoiding two common problems that often plague assessments: *Whose "turf" is being trespassed upon?* and *If duplication is found, whose program gets cut?* There are often strong and legitimate feelings that a given agency or organization has the right and responsibility to deal with needs in a specific area. If you are seen as "butting in" or "taking over," not only won't you be able to gain their cooperation but your entire effort may be jeopardized. Sometimes the resistance will be open; sometimes it will take the form of subtle undermining; sometimes the obstructionists are not even aware that they are interfering.

Some organizations have had the experience of discovering late in the process that there was actually a hidden purpose in a needs assessment—that of determining evidence of duplication of services and doing something about it—and have found their programs and budgets cut as a result. By involving them early on, you can demonstrate the true purposes of the assessment and thus avoid their suspicion and resistance. If searching for duplication is an objective, you'll probably be more effective by specifying it early and offering the groups the option of dealing with the matter openly.

Do you want to broaden the base?

Many of the individuals and agencies you contact may have similar interests and wish to combine efforts. If so, they may wish to add other areas of possible need to the assessment. Will including the other areas change the assessment to the degree that your objectives will not be achieved? Will the assessment become so large or broad that your interests will get lost in the shuffle? How much help will these others provide in conducting the assessment, and what will they do about the identified needs? If you include their areas and they take no action, will your group receive the anger of the community?

Who's around to help?

Help can come from many different sources and in many different ways. School teachers, administrators, and social welfare agency personnel sometimes have experience in surveys and may be willing to advise. Local colleges, universities, and high schools may have student groups or classes that would help develop, test, and carry out the survey. Teachers or professors may be interested in making your study their class project.

Librarians, city or village officials, and local and regional planners can direct you to the census tract data, city records, and other sources of past history. They may also be able to provide you with ideas for your assessment.

Civic organizations, sororities, fraternal groups, churches, and social clubs are often willing to assist in carrying out surveys. Your own local community is rich with resources and help. All you have to do is ask! Think out ways of showing that your study is interesting and important, and you're likely to be surprised at how much help you'll get.

What are the geographic limits of your survey?

We have already pointed out the importance of having in mind just what the "community" is that is the focus of your concern. It is usually advisable to draw some specific boundary lines on a map to delimit the area from which your information is to be obtained.

Who are the people you want to ask?

What is the area you wish to assess or serve? Who should be included and who excluded? If you are interested in what a particular group thinks or wants, then *they* are the ones who can tell you. Others can only tell you what they assume the particular group thinks.

Too often, groups conducting assessments define the area served to fit the amount of help they have to conduct the survey. The amount of help available often indicates the number of people asked and the methods of asking them but should not determine the overall area or group to be asked. Your community should include all those who will be influenced or affected by the survey, although they do not all have to be directly involved.

How many do you need to interview to get a true picture?

The question is sometimes put a little differently: Should we interview everybody or just a sample of our citizenry? And the answer to that question, like the answer to many questions involved in community development, is: That depends!

If the information you need is already a matter of record or can be observed, perhaps you do not need to interview anyone. As we pointed out earlier, you may be able to conduct a satisfactory needs assessment by

studying recorded data about aspects of your community or by observing conditions around you. Such actions may provide you with the evidence you need without interviewing people.

One disadvantage of this method is that the problem you decide upon as most needing attention, using this means, may not be one that is widely recognized by the general citizenry. Therefore, if you intend to address yourselves to such a problem, you will need to spend time and energy "educating" people to the seriousness of the problem before you can move to get the breadth of support you need to deal with it.

If, on the other hand, the information you need is not on record but exists in the minds of a few people knowledgeable about your community, you may wish to limit your interviews to persons you feel are in positions to know what is happening and what is needed. Some of these people can be identified by their position, such as the police chief, the school superintendent, etc., but some knowledgeables may have no official position at all. This method has the advantage of requiring fewer people to gather the information you need than would a general survey of community residents.

One potential disadvantage is that the perceptions of the leaders may differ from those of the community at large. The presence of such a discrepancy can only be determined by interviewing people in the community. For example, a needs assessment in a rural area of Kentucky revealed that the parents of high school students thought their number one problem was drug abuse. The school superintendent said, "That's not the problem; we have very little drug use here. The real problem is that the parents *perceive it* to be the problem, and that's where we have to start!" So the "perceived" need was more critical than the "real" need.

There are problems and needs in any community. They exist whether or not anyone perceives them. Some perceptions identify situations that do not actually exist, and thus the *perception* becomes the problem that needs to be dealt with. In the Kentucky community, what was needed was an informational program aimed at the parents. But without the survey, school administrators would not have known what action to take. Therefore, interviews with community residents can often be most helpful.

But, *how many?* In some respects, *who* you interview among the citizenry is more important than the *number* you interview. If you ask only your friends, your conclusions really ought to be limited to "My friends say. . . ." To avoid this embarrassing possibility you should ask yourself: Are all areas of the community involved? Are we building in plans to interview people from different segments of the community, such as minorities, the poor, and specific religious or ethnic groups? Do we need to maintain a balance of men and women interviewed?

There are, of course, scientific (statistical) ways of improving the odds that your survey accurately reflects the community, and if you are fortunate enough to have access to people in or near your community who know about such matters, by all means consult them. But don't let the absence of such a resource stop you from going ahead.

Keep in mind that, if you intend to find out what the people think or feel, you need to get information from all kinds of people. And, since it often helps to have as many people as possible thinking about their community and its needs, there *are* advantages in asking as many people as possible—short of overtaxing yourself and your resources.

When you report your findings, it's a good idea to tell how you selected the respondents.

What survey method should be used?

If you intend to assess your community's needs by means of data gathered from the general citizenry, you will have to decide which of several methods

to use. Below are listed the most common ones, together with comments about their advantages and disadvantages.

DOOR-TO-DOOR SURVEY. The main advantage of this method is the personal touch, which enhances interest in the community and its problems, promotes clarification of the questions asked and the answers given, and encourages openness and candor. One of the major drawbacks is *time*, as the interviews often last longer than expected because many people like to talk—*and be heard*. Some people prefer to work in teams of two on door-to-door surveys. Such practice can sometimes improve rapport with those interviewed and may contribute to more complete and accurate reports, but it adds, of course, to the time and energy spent.

In door-to-door surveys it is also possible to leave the form at the home to be completed and picked up later. Or forms can be left with a request to mail them back. Leaving them and returning to pick them up allows for a greater distribution in the same amount of time but creates extra work in collecting. Asking people to mail back their responses, however, usually results in a reduced number of responses. In addition, this system may result in loss of control over *who* in the home fills out the form. This can become important if some of the questions deal with attitudes, feelings, and opinions about aspects of the community and if it is considered important to maintain a balance of male and female respondents.

MAIL SURVEY. This is an easy way to reach large numbers of people. If the survey form is short, banks, utilities, or phone companies may be willing to include it in their billings. A postpaid return envelope will yield more responses than expecting people to provide a stamp. Although mail surveys can reach many people, you must anticipate a low and probably unrepresentative return.

TELEPHONE SURVEY. The major advantage of this method is the easy and direct access it offers. However, since some people are suspicious of phone solicitations, it is often much harder to build trust. After you explain the purpose of the call, asking the question "Do you have a few minutes to answer these questions?" usually helps. Simple yes-no questions also help. Since it is often more difficult for the respondent to pause and think while on the phone than during a face-to-face interview, "Take your time" may be a helpful comment. In this method, also, one tends to have less control over *who* answers the questions.

As you can see, each of the above methods has advantages and disadvantages. We suggest that you examine these pros and cons, choose one method that seems best to suit your situation, and proceed. We do feel it appropriate to point out that you may need to handle the questions you are asking somewhat differently, depending on the method of collection you use. For example, if you use the mails or the drop-off-and-pick-up method, you will need to be especially careful to have your questions clear and understandable for there will be nobody around to explain what the questions *mean*.

CONDUCTING THE SURVEY

What questions should be asked, and how should they be worded?

Since the area, or areas, you may wish to explore can be of widely different varieties, we cannot in this guide provide specific questions ...at could be asked. We can, however, offer one admonition: *Keep constantly in mind just*

what use each question will be to you. Ask no more and no fewer questions that you feel are absolutely necessary to provide you with the information you need. This may appear to be an obvious statement, but all too often we have found that groups not only fail to ask critical questions but, especially, fall into the trap of asking for more than they really need to know or will be able to use.

If you really want to know about a subject, there is usually no reason not to ask. If you don't really want to know, there are many reasons not to. A couple of phrases that often, but not always, warn you that you're asking too much are "It would be interesting to find out . . ." and "It would be nice to know. . . ." On the other hand, "If we knew . . ., then we could . . ." is the kind of question that can lead to useful information.

The way your questions are worded will affect the information you'll get. Some question wordings can *lead* the respondents to think about something that they might not think about otherwise. "Leading" is neither good nor bad in itself. It's how you do it, and how you interpret the answers, that make it good or bad.

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When we want to know people's concerns in general, we usually include (preferably begin with) an open-ended question such as "What are your major concerns [about your community or whatever]?" If we want to know how they feel about a specific issue, such as housing, we might ask, "Do you think housing is a problem?" or "Is housing a bigger problem than unemployment?" Unfortunately, when most people hear the word "problem" in a question, they often assume there is one even if they didn't before. Therefore, it is often better to ask, "How do you feel about the adequacy [or "supply" or "condition"] of housing in our community?"

Although it is usually acceptable to lead people into specific areas in which you are interested, it is not fair to lead them toward specific answers. "Is housing still a problem?" and "How bad is housing around here?" are examples of unfair, leading questions.

Open-ended questions are useful in determining what is actually on people's minds; they reduce the amount of leading. Such questions are, however, sometimes difficult to tabulate and organize. The responses will cover many fields and range from the general to the specific. Questions that direct answers are, on the other hand, easy to organize and tabulate. "Do you Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, or Strongly Disagree with the following statements?" and "On a five-point scale—with "1" being the best and "5" the worst—please rate . . ." are other examples of directed-answer types of questions.

Most surveys combine the open-ended with the directed. Again, however, it depends on what you want to find out and what you are prepared to do with the information when you get it.

Try constantly to "put yourself in the shoes" of those who will be answering the questions you are considering asking. And, even after you have done your best, using that strategy, it is advisable to try out (pretest) your questionnaire or survey form on a half dozen or so of the different kinds of people you intend to get information from. Taking such a step "before you set things in concrete" can often improve the way questions are worded, the order in which they are asked, and sometimes even the kind of information asked for. (The wording of your questions is especially important if you are expecting people to fill out the forms by themselves.)

What do you want your respondents to learn?

Asking what you want respondents to learn, at this point in the community effort, may seem peculiar, but it should be recognized that a survey can

sometimes *give* as much information as it *gets*. Therefore, you should think about what you want to convey and then take steps to do it.

Although your primary purpose is to gather information, not lecture people, the very act of explaining who your group is, why you are doing the survey, what you plan to do with the information, and your interest in knowing what people think will start many people thinking about things in their community that they might not have thought much about, if at all.

Moreover, if handled judiciously, surveys can provide teaching opportunities. In one community, for example, in which a group was surveying health needs and the use of health services, it was anticipated, and found to be true, that the very act of asking people about immunization and frequency of dental checkups reminded people of matters that they had not attended to but should have. Moreover, since public health services was an area of interest to the survey group, at the end of each interview the interviewer gave each family a card describing the various services and including the addresses and telephone numbers of the public health department and other health agencies. As had been predicted, business at the public health department picked up markedly in the months following the survey.

Think about it. You, too, might be able to inform as you inquire.

How should the survey helpers be trained?

If you have developed a questionnaire to leave in people's homes to be picked up later, the task of training the volunteer helpers is usually quite simple and might be handled by a single sheet of suggestions on procedures to be used. Included in these suggestions should be such things as:

1. Which homes to leave the forms at (if you are taking a *sample* of residents, you might suggest that they leave it at "every other household" or "every fifth household," or whatever ratio will give you a manageable number of responses to tabulate).
2. What to say about the survey when leaving the forms—what group(s) you represent, what you plan to do with the information, your interest in knowing what people think, *and* assurance that the responses will be treated confidentially.
3. How much time to give people to complete the form (we suggest not more than a week).
4. A recommendation that respondents be asked, when the forms are picked up, whether there were any questions they'd like clarified (and if they haven't completed them, to consider asking if they could fill them out right then).

If you have planned your survey to be carried out by personal interview, we suggest that you assemble the survey helpers in a group and provide them with information about *who* to interview and *what to say* in introducing themselves to respondents. Then divide the group up into pairs and have them interview each other. The ensuing discussion will help to clarify questions as to how to conduct an interview.

In fact, there are those who suggest that large numbers of copies of the final survey form *not* be run off until *after* this training session. This session could then serve as an additional pretest, with resulting minor modifications in the form. This would also provide enough responses so that those who are to compile the survey results could do a "dog run" to see whether the data can be summarized into meaningful categories. If they can't, some changes are clearly called for.

Who is going to handle publicity about the survey?

Although a community survey *can* be carried out without a publicity campaign, it usually helps to have one. If people know a survey is coming, they are more likely to cooperate, especially if they know that it is being carried out, or sponsored, by groups they know and respect.

Newspapers and local radio and TV stations are often willing to publicize community projects and activities. Announcements by ministers, information distributed through the schools, and announcements included in bank statements should be considered as possible ways to inform people. Since the task of obtaining this kind of help takes time, it is usually advisable to have a small committee concentrate on publicity.

How should control over the survey process be maintained?

Regardless of the method you plan to use, you need to maintain a "command post" or headquarters from which the process can be directed. From such a location, those responsible can keep track of what is taking place and can answer questions immediately.

If you are doing a mail survey, this place can be the collecting point for the returned questionnaires. If you are leaving the questionnaires to be filled out and picked up later, the command post can be the place where people can call for clarification about the entire survey or about a particular question (*provided*, of course, you've remembered to put that phone number on the questionnaire!).

If you are planning to conduct personal interviews, the headquarters can be the place for handling those inevitable, oftentimes unforeseen, questions that come up. Some of the unplanned-for questions that can arise are: "What do I do if no one is at home?" (Decide on a uniform answer that will be given to everyone—perhaps "Call back at a different hour, and, if you still have no luck, interview an adjacent household.") "How much am I supposed to fill in?" ("Please be sure the form is complete before you leave the home.") "What am I supposed to do with the completed forms?" (You wouldn't believe how often that one is missed! "Bring them or send them here.")

Note: If the community you are surveying is a large one, you may wish to have area or neighborhood captains who will work with teams of interviewers. They may be able to answer many of the questions that arise, but be sure the answers are the same in all areas!

EXAMINING AND REPORTING THE RESULTS

How should the survey responses be summarized and reported?

How your data should be summarized will, of course, depend on the kind of data you have obtained. If you have gotten your information through interviews with a few knowledgeable persons, or through an examination of information already summarized in formal records, you will probably find it best simply to develop a narrative report describing your findings.

If, however, you have gathered large quantities of data from community citizens, you will need to do some classifying and counting. If you have asked some open-ended questions and received a wide range of answers, you will need to develop a set of categories that will include this range and then count the number of times a specific category was

mentioned. This could result in your being able to say such things as: "When the 315 people from whom we obtained information were asked what they considered to be the community's most critical need, 150 (or almost half) of them said 'housing.' " You may wish to supplement this with quotations from some of the comments in order to give the reader some sense of what aspect of housing is considered to be critical.

Directed, or limited-answer, questions are easy to report. Using the well-known tally system (i.e., 1111 1), you can quite rapidly sum up the results and be able to say, for example, "Fifty percent of our respondents said they strongly agreed with the way our police are handling juvenile delinquents, 40 percent agreed, and 10 percent strongly disagreed."

When questions are similar or you have asked several questions about the same general subject, tables are helpful. As an example, suppose you asked a series of questions about recreational facilities in order to find out whether people felt there were too few, about the right number, or too many. A table like the accompanying one could be used to summarize their responses.

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Opinion About Adequacy of Recreational Facilities

	Enough		Too Many		Too Few		Total		No Response
	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	No.
Parks	12	(8)	24	(16)	64	(43)	100	(67)	(3)
Golf Courses	58	(25)	19	(8)	23	(10)	100	(43)	(27)
Tennis Courts	42	(15)	29	(10)	29	(10)	100	(35)	(35)
Playgrounds	58	(30)	23	(12)	19	(10)	100	(52)	(18)

This table may look complicated at first glance, but a little examination will reveal that it is quite understandable. It shows not only the actual number of replies (in parentheses) but also the number who did not answer the question ("No response") and *especially* the percentage distributions, for those responding, of opinions about the adequacy of each kind of recreational facility.

The interpretation could be as follows: "(1) Nearly two thirds (64%) of those responding thought there were too few parks; (2) the majority (58%) thought that the supply of golf courses and playground facilities was adequate; and (3) interest in tennis courts was rather modest (since half didn't even respond to the question)."

In reporting the results of your survey, of course, you will need to decide whether you wish to make a narrative observation about the data, as was done above, or prefer to simply report the data in tabular form and let people draw their own conclusions. If you decide it will be useful to draw people's attention to your observations, include a narrative. If you want them to do it for themselves, don't.

You must make a similar decision regarding whether, in your report, to draw conclusions and make recommendations. A conclusion from the above data could be "We need more parks." A recommendation would be "Let's develop a new park!" Your decision on this matter may well depend on who you are reporting to, and how. If your organization is the only one that is going to take action, or the major initiative is "in your camp," then you may wish to include not only your observations but your conclusions and recommendations as well.

If, however, you plan to conduct public meetings or meetings with other community groups to provide them with an opportunity to be parties to the final decision, you may prefer to do no more than offer observations and let the groups draw conclusions and make recommendations. Or you may prefer to lead them all the way through some recommendations and solicit their reactions.

As with many of the decisions involved in community development, this too should be yours to make; there is no *right* answer. Past ways of doing things, the people or organizations involved, and the purpose of the survey—all should be considered in making your decision. We would only suggest that usually the more people involved in making a recommendation, the more people likely to be willing to help turn it into action.

DECIDING WHAT ACTION TO TAKE REGARDING A PROJECT OR PROGRAM

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There are several considerations to keep in mind as you decide what to do with the results of your survey. First of all, as noted above, you must determine who will be involved in making a recommendation. In addition, you need to consider whether your group or coalition of groups can handle the project you have in mind, the likelihood of citizen support, and the kind of resources you'll need. The next chapter discusses the task of inventorying and recruiting resources. We recommend that you consider the possible resources for all the different alternative projects you might work on. Suggestions as to ways you can use the information from your needs assessment and the potential resources as you move to determine what you will work on will be found in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 3

INVENTORYING AND RECRUITING RESOURCES

THE PROBLEM

An essential part of any community development activity is the identification, evaluation, and recruitment of the resources needed to attain desired community goals.

Resources for community development are currently so multifaceted and complex—often subtle and obscure—that citizens have difficulty activating or gaining access to them. In fact, many people are not even aware of the resources that exist. This is particularly true for people living in smaller communities, especially with respect to resources lying outside the community where the fine art of grantsmanship often plays a crucial role.

In this maze of resources, how does one proceed? The following guidelines may be helpful:

1. Assess carefully and realistically the kinds and amounts of resources that you are likely to *need*, and develop a timetable for their use. Underestimation and overestimation alike can be troublesome, each in its own way.
2. Start with yourself, your immediate group(s), and your own community. Local resources may not suffice, but they represent a foundation of personal involvement that is usually essential to recruitment of resources from others.
3. Inventory the entire field of relevant resources, from local to international, and select for aggressive pursuit those which can best contribute to the attainment of your goal(s).
4. Don't ask for resources (e.g., federal funds) simply because they are available. This could upset your community's schedule or priorities and, in the long run, do more harm than good. Remember the old adage: "Be careful what you ask for. You just might get it!"

TYPES OF RESOURCES

In developing the pattern of resources you expect to use, you need to consider three general components. First, there are *human* resources such as leadership skills, substantive expertise of all kinds, technical assistance, community spirit, motivation, energy, willingness to work, imagination, ingenuity, cooperation, frankness, goodwill, intellectual honesty, and clout (influence/power).

Second, there are *physical* resources, comprising natural resources (soil, water, clean air, minerals, oil, natural gas, topography, climate, forests,

wildlife, and scenic beauty) on the one hand and constructed resources (buildings, equipment, machinery, supplies, etc.) on the other.

Finally, there are *financial* resources, which are increasingly important since the traditional volunteer/mutual-aid approach often needs to be supplemented with, or replaced by, other strategies for getting things done.

LEVELS OF RESOURCES AVAILABLE

Space does not permit the development here of a name-and-place-specific inventory of all resources available for community development purposes. A consideration of major resource levels might be of value, however, particularly if the likely sources of assistance, the common obstacles encountered, and suitable strategies for gaining access to the resources are noted for each level.

The following list and analysis is not intended to be exhaustive; but careful scrutiny of it may nevertheless be of some assistance to you in your efforts to identify and acquire necessary resources.

1. The local level

Likely sources include voluntary associations and clubs, community councils, educational and religious institutions, business and industry, local government agencies, social service agencies, libraries, mass media, influentials, professionals (public and private), interested citizens (children, youth, adult, retired). . . .

Obstacles encountered are apathy, inadequate or overworked leadership, cleavages and personal antagonisms, lack of persistence, lack of self-confidence, uninformed or unsympathetic influentials, inadequate communication, overorganization or underorganization. . . .

Strategies include talent inventory; leadership training; carefully conceived proposals; broad, effective involvement; intergroup collaboration; division of labor; the personal contact approach; a good publicity and public relations program; constructive resolution of conflict; learning from mistakes; recognition/awards. . . .

2. The interlocal governmental cooperation level

As interdependence and interaction among communities have increased over the years, the concept of joint planning and action has very naturally appeared on the scene—as a supplement to (or partial replacement for) the traditional pattern of independent operation by adjacent localities.

Although the discussion here focuses on intergovernmental arrangements, it should be noted that interlocal cooperation is by no means limited to the governmental sphere. Nongovernment organizations of many kinds also make effective use of this strategy, e.g., the "larger parish" type of church consolidation, regional chambers of commerce, and areawide associations for the fine and performing arts.

Interlocal governmental cooperation has appeared in many forms, sometimes prompted by necessity (as in coping with such regional problems as pollution control) and sometimes to improve the quality of services that tend to be substandard when administered locally (e.g., sanitary waste disposal in rural areas).

Authorization for interlocal governmental programs has been gained through various types of state legislation such as Nebraska's 1963 Interlocal Cooperation Act, which provides that "any power or powers, privileges or authority exercised or capable of exercise by a public agency of this state

may be exercised and enjoyed jointly with any other public agency of this state having such power or powers, privilege or authority"; and to this end, "any two or more public agencies may enter into agreements with one another for joint or cooperative action. . . ."

Likely sources of help along interlocal governmental cooperation lines are found in councils of governments (COGS), areawide planning organizations, regional ACTION agencies, and intercommunity or multicounty specialized government service agencies of various kinds such as water districts, joint airports, and educational service units for special education programs.

The *obstacles* to effective interlocal cooperation are many. Among the more prominent are suspicions, jealousies and antagonisms among the collaborating units and the feeling that "your gain is our loss," faulty organization, insufficient funding, and a lack of confidence among the smaller communities in the concepts of justice and fair play held by the larger communities concerned.

The basic *strategies* involved are the pooling of resources by villages, cities, counties, school districts, and special districts toward common ends; personal contact among diverse elements to build mutual confidence; and strict adherence to the principle of a square deal for all units encompassed, regardless of size and clout.

3. The statewide level

Likely sources of assistance include statewide voluntary organizations and any business/industrial/agricultural/professional groups having an interest in community development, college and university outreach (extension or continuing education) programs, state government agencies (e.g., economic development, community planning, health, education, welfare, transportation, labor, law enforcement, tourism, parks/wildlife/recreation, and library), the mass media, state councils/committees for the arts and humanities, historical societies/archives. . . .

Obstacles encountered in gaining access to available statewide resources frequently relate to the complexity of the overall pattern of such resources, grassroots timidity in approaching "the bureaucrats" (whether in government, private enterprise, or voluntary associations), fear of undue state-level interference in local affairs, negative orientation toward the normally required reports to state-level agencies and organizations from which assistance is received. . . .

Strategies for effective utilization of resources from statewide agencies would include advance study and evaluation of possible statewide resources, painstaking preparation of proposals at the local level, personal contact with statewide personnel in key positions, liaison with appropriate representatives/senators in state legislatures when important public issues are involved, tactful persistence, adequate display of local initiative and dedication, participation in relevant workshops/programs sponsored by statewide resource agencies, acquisition of helpful written materials (newsletters, periodicals, reports, etc.). . . .

4. The level of national and related regional units

Likely sources are pertinent federal agencies—the departments of Housing and Urban Development, Health and Human Services, Education, Interior, Agriculture (Extension Service/Community Resource Development, Economic Research Service, Farmers Home Administration), Commerce (including Bureau of the Census), Transportation, and Labor; National Endowment for the Arts; National Endowment for the Humanities; voluntary organizations (e.g., Community Development Society, Adult Education Association of the U.S.A.,

General Federation of Women's Clubs, National University Extension Association, American Library Association, National Center for Voluntary Action); foundations (Kellogg, Ford, Rockefeller, etc.). . . .

Also, see local libraries for community development literature and audiovisual materials and for a reference book listing major national voluntary associations in the United States.

Obstacles include red tape and bureaucracy, difficulty of adapting certain nationally conceived programs to local conditions (especially in smaller communities), keeping abreast of changing rules and regulations, lack of correspondence of specific local needs/priorities with the types of national aids available, lack of grantsmanship know-how in smaller towns and cities, tendency toward overemphasis upon short-term programs where outside support is of a terminal nature. . . .

Strategies are cautious choice of appropriate channel(s) (with recognition of local responsibilities entailed), thorough and objective preparatory work at the local level before making formal request to a national agency, full understanding of how the proposal fits into the overall community context, strong confidence in the proposal, tactful use of influentials, employment of grantsmanship skills where applications for funds are concerned, patience, accurate record keeping on how the resources obtained are used, objective evaluation of progress. . . .

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5. The international level

The United Nations and its many affiliated agencies provide resources of numerous kinds for communities developing programs dealing with world affairs. The same is true of various other internationally oriented organizations. Further, you might wish to establish liaison with programs in foreign lands that bear resemblance to yours, or "pick the brains" of American acquaintances who have had experience abroad, and, of course, scrutinize the growing field of international literature on community development.

A final suggestion that you may find useful if you are contemplating going outside your community for resources: Consider looking around you for an "outward-facing" citizen who could help you. An outward-facing person is one who, though he or she may not be especially active in community organizations, is knowledgeable about, and has contacts with, people and organizations at county, state, or national levels. Though such persons may not wish to participate in carrying out your entire project, they may well have enough loyalty toward the community in which they live to help you in the initial stages.

THE USE OF CONSULTANTS

Professional consultants can be a valuable, sometimes essential, resource; but they must be properly used.

The role of the consultant as an agent of change has been subjected to considerable examination by those who have studied community development programs. Polar philosophies have been well described by Roland Warren (1971) in his *truth vs. love* typology, where "truth" represents an outside expert who uses a task-oriented manipulative strategy, as opposed to the "love" approach, where the consultant is process-oriented and serves basically as a resource person (or "encourager," as William Biddle (1965) puts it).

In reality, community development consultants seldom rely entirely upon either of these two approaches. Instead, a continuum seems to exist

that encompasses a number of procedures varying from truth to love, with different strategies applied in diverse situations or at various stages of the community development process.

Any community that retains the services of a professional consultant in connection with the implementation of a community development program would do well to keep the following principles in mind:

- A consultant should strengthen your community's ability to carry on after his/her departure.
- Input from local citizens is essential to optimum results. Your community should not be an audience of passive spectators on the sidelines, watching an "expert at work."
- The consultant should not assume leadership functions that could be adequately handled by local persons. To do so deprives local leaders of an opportunity to grow and develop through experience.
- Above all, the ultimate decision-making function must be retained by your community and not delegated to the consultant (except, perhaps, where highly technical matters are concerned).

Community development consultants are increasing rapidly in number. Many are available in the realm of private enterprise—from planning, architectural, engineering, community research, and landscaping firms. On the public and quasi-public front, consultants are ordinarily within easy reach through pertinent federal, state, and local government agencies; from public utility companies; through college and university extension programs; and through nonprofit leadership training programs of various kinds.

In addition, there are many persons, not necessarily professional consultants, who nevertheless have sufficient expertise to serve the cause of community development in an advisory capacity. They might be teachers, lawyers, doctors, businessmen and businesswomen, industrialists, farmers, clergy, environmentalists, social workers, elderly sages, or others. Such people may be found among outward-facing persons in your community, or at county, state, or national levels.

CONCLUSION

In this day and age, there are more resources available for community development than most people realize. Make a special effort to become aware of them as they relate to your needs, problems, and potentials. Activate them vigorously, but judiciously. Be conscious of any responsibilities that you may be morally or legally obliged to assume in accepting help from others. Begin "at home," and then seek additional resources elsewhere as needed.

CHAPTER 4

PLANNING THE ACTION

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After you have defined your community's needs and have identified appropriate and available resources, you and your community group(s) are ready to turn your attention to planning the action. There are *two* important decisions to be made in this step of planning the action. Although they may sound simple and obvious, they will require your best efforts. They will also strongly influence the action itself, which is the subject of the *next* chapter. The two are: (1) deciding *what* you plan to do, and (2) deciding *how* you plan to do it. Each of these elements is examined in detail below.

DECIDING WHAT YOU PLAN TO DO

Suggestions about deciding that first question—*what* you plan to do—were explored briefly in the second chapter. However, now that you have had an opportunity to think about possible resources in relation to the needs which have surfaced (Chapter 3), it would be a good idea to examine the *what* question again in greater detail.

Don't jump on the first need expressed. Don't decide too quickly on a project because some other community did it. Look, listen, and try to find out how interested and how concerned others in your community are about a particular need or issue. Pick something that is worth doing and something you feel that you and others in your community can do.

Richard Poston (1976), who has spent a lifetime in community development work, offers two important suggestions at this point in the process. First, he encourages community members to take a very broad and inclusive view of their community and take into account the maze of human activity and the diverse attitudes and interests that distinguish their community from all others. Second, he urges community members to list any number of projects they would like to initiate, and then he asks that the group(s)

> consider a point of view which says that *none* of these projects you have listed, no matter how important, comprises the ultimate goal of the community effort you are about to start. Look upon these specific projects, not as ends in themselves, but merely as intermediate actions in a series of actions, which if accomplished within the framework of widespread citizen participation and informed public discussion and decision-making, instead of being pushed through by a small hand-picked group ready to do battle with all comers, can become instrumental in achieving the most important goal of all: *The development of your community into an effective problem-solving citizenry!* [pp. 9-10]

Arthur Dunham (1970), another person who has spent a lifetime in working with communities, makes the same point when he states that "community development is concerned with *both* task goals and process goals: that is, it is concerned with achieving certain concrete objectives *and* with strengthening the qualities of participation, self-direction, and cooperation" (p. 173).

So what you plan to do is complicated by the fact that you are dealing with two important objectives—completing a task you have set for yourself and your organization(s) and involving the people of your community as fully as possible in all phases of that task.

What Paxton and Dunham are stressing is basic good community effort. What you plan to do—your goal—is important, but even more important is how you go about it. Whether your goal is attracting a new industry or organizing a summer youth program or whatever, it is essential that you obtain maximum community involvement in all phases of the project, from assessing needs to evaluating the results of your community's efforts. Deciding *what* you plan to do is a decision *your* community must make. And the community should be fully involved in making that decision, not simply approving a plan developed by a few people or a plan imposed from outside the community.

Actually, it comes down to two rather basic assumptions stated by Murray G. Ross (1955). These two assumptions are: (1) "We assume that people should participate in making, adjusting, or controlling the major changes taking place in their communities," and (2) "we assume that changes in community living that are self-imposed or self-developed have a meaning and a permanence that imposed changes do not have" (pp. 88-89). If we agree with Ross, we can see the logic and importance of planning *with* members of our community, not planning *for* them.

A second part of the "what to do" is looking at alternatives. Once you and other community members have decided on a particular need or interest, your *next* move is to look at various ways you might go about meeting that need or interest. Let's take an example. If you and other community members have decided on the need for more summer activities for young people, you have identified your objective, but you haven't as yet decided how to approach it. You might start a drive to raise money to build a youth center. You might lease land for ball fields and other sports. There are many things you *might* do. The important question is: What *do* you do? The best way to answer that is to look at various ways in which the objective might be reached.

How do you pick one alternative from many? How do you arrive at a decision with which you feel comfortable, that feels right for your community? There is no magic formula, but here are a few suggestions:

1. List as many alternatives as possible. Don't be bound by what another community did or what one or two persons consider the "best answer." Involve the community, seek out suggestions, get as many ideas as you can. Don't be too quick to discount any idea because it sounds too expensive to some or too unworkable to others.
2. Look at each of the alternatives in light of how well you think each will answer the objective you have identified.
3. Look at your community resources (discussed in Chapter 3) and outside resources and see if they are adequate to carry out the various alternatives.
4. Compare the various alternatives in terms of cost, time, feasibility, and community interest and support.

5. Keep in mind that, at least for some types of projects, there must be a continuing community commitment to *maintain* the project. Can and will your community fulfill this commitment?

If you follow these suggestions, it should help you and other members of your community to select the alternative that seems right for your community.

Sometimes, more than one alternative may seem to fit your situation. If this is the case, you may want to select the alternative that can be accomplished most easily and that relies primarily on local resources. This is particularly important if this is one of your first community ventures. Seeking to achieve an objective that is relatively simple and quick and does not need much in the way of outside resources makes sense and increases your community's chances of successful completion of the project. Later, after you have had more experience working together, you and other members of your community will be better prepared to tackle more complex projects that will take more time and involve resources from beyond your community.

Along with these suggestions, let's take a brief look at *criteria* and *priority*. When you begin to compare the various alternatives, you will want to decide what criteria or standards your decision will be based on. You may decide that getting this particular project completed quickly is of the greatest importance. If so, how long each alternative will take to carry out becomes an important standard for judging the alternatives. If meeting the needs of a large number of young people is your major concern, each alternative will need to be looked at in terms of the potential number it will serve. Whatever your organization(s) and members of your community consider to be the important features of your project, these are the standards or criteria by which each alternative should be judged.

When you list the alternatives in order of the degree to which they meet your objectives or standards, you have developed a priority listing. Unless there are other important and practical considerations, the alternative at the top of your list should be the one you implement. An example of "other important and practical considerations" might be the situation where leasing land for a summer youth program is your first choice, with the possibility of buying land as a second choice. If an interested community member offers to sell you land for the project at a very low price, you and the other community members may decide the second alternative is best.

To summarize, then, *what* you plan to do should include:

1. Taking a broad and inclusive look at your community.
2. Paying equal attention both to your goal and to involving community members in discussion, decision making, and cooperative effort.
3. Considering as many alternatives as possible and weighing each one in terms of whatever criteria are important in your situation.
4. Being reasonably sure your community can and will maintain the project if that is necessary.

Now that you have decided *what* you plan to do, you must decide *how* you plan to carry out your project.

DECIDING HOW YOU PLAN TO CARRY OUT THE PROJECT

In deciding *how* to proceed, you really are deciding who does what, when, where, and how. This involves setting up specific objectives and a realistic timetable—developing a logical, step-by-step procedure. Tasks are assigned, and an organization is created to carry out the project.

And when you are deciding who does what, remember to designate a coordinator and/or "encourager" for the project. Whether or not these are one and the same person depends on the people in your organization. Usually these roles are taken by different people, but in some instances the coordinator and the encourager are the same person. We recommend strongly that both roles be filled; but the coordinator, at least, is really essential.

As far as the role of coordinator is concerned, the name defines the function. The coordinator keeps an eye on all activities and has the authority to make nonpolicy decisions in a hurry: Can we buy 100 more stamps right now? Can we run 40 more surveys by this afternoon? Projects are rarely successful without coordinators!

The role of the encourager is more difficult to define. It's hard, in any case, to *designate* an encourager; they frequently just happen. They are the spark plugs of the project. They, too, have an eye on all activities, but their primary duties are interpersonal. Encouragers soothe damaged egos, smooth conflicts, cheer up discouraged survey takers. Projects certainly can get done without encouragers, but their presence makes everything not only easier but also more enjoyable.

Planning the action and carrying out the action (the subject of the next chapter) have the same relationship to each other as a budget and a financial statement. The budget indicates how much you plan to spend for various items, whereas the financial statement indicates how the money is actually spent. The better the budget planning, the closer the budget and the financial statement will agree except for unusual developments that may make some changes necessary. The same differences may appear between the planning and the carrying out of a community development project. The point is, however, that the better the planning, the fewer the subsequent surprises and the closer the resemblance of the action to the plan.

With this in mind, we will look at six suggestions that should help you in planning the action. This will be followed by a checklist of items you will want to consider as you move from planning to action.

Establishing goals and objectives

We are not going to get involved in a discussion of the distinction between goals and objectives. They both can be defined as the end toward which your efforts are directed. But it is important to think in terms of both long- and short-range objectives and breaking down goals into subgoals. First, let's look at both long- and short-range objectives.

Most community projects continue over a period of time, from a few months to a few years. The summer youth program, the example referred to earlier, may take several years to achieve. This becomes a long-range objective. The short-range objective may be the purchase or lease of suitable playing area this year. If you can keep both the long- and short-range objectives clearly in mind, you can focus on the immediate goal and still work toward the longer-range goal that may take several years to achieve.

Breaking down a goal into subgoals is a further refinement of this same process. Leasing or buying land may be the short-range objective, but even this is made up of several actions leading to lease or purchase. You and members of the community need to identify these subgoals as steps along the way to achieving your goal. The more this can be done, the clearer will be your plan for action.

Driving from New York to San Francisco may be your goal, but your subgoals may include driving through St. Louis and Denver. Each subgoal reached not only gives you a feeling of progress toward the goal but provides an opportunity to assess whether you are on the right path to your eventual goal.

But whether you are planning short-term goals or long-term objectives, *be specific*. State your goals in measurable terms. Avoid vague phrases like "We want people to appreciate their neighborhoods." Instead, state your goal in terms that can be measured—"We want to clean up the trash in the second ward," "We want to plant fourteen trees," etc. In fact, even at this early point you should be working with the project evaluator(s) who can help formulate goals. (See Chapter 6, the sections entitled "When Should the Project Be Evaluated?" and "How Should the Evaluation Be Done?")

Setting target dates

Along with long-term and short-term objectives and goals and subgoals, you need to set target dates for the completion of each of the steps or subgoals. A realistic timetable is an important way to keep you and members of the community moving ahead and on schedule. How long should it take to achieve the first subgoal? How long before a second step can be completed? Can a second step be initiated before you complete the first one?

The timetable you establish will, of necessity, be tentative and may need to be adjusted from time to time. What it accomplishes, however, is important. It requires you to consider realistically what can be done in a specific amount of time. Rather than simply pledging to complete a project "by next summer," you identify a number of subgoals on the way to completing the project and decide how long it will take to complete each of these.

Developing a step-by-step plan

Nothing is more important for achieving your objective than developing a logical, step-by-step plan. Establishing goals and subgoals and setting target dates make a good start in this direction. Now you are being encouraged to think carefully and decide what comes first, what second, and so on. Most activities have a logical sequence of events, and it is your task to lay out that sequence in detail. Again, as with the timetable, later events may require you to make some adjustments in your plan. Minor adjustments in an existing plan, however, are much preferable to a plan so general that one cannot tell whether adjustments are needed or not.

Sometimes you may not know enough about a project to lay out in advance a step-by-step plan. If this is the case, you are still encouraged to set down as much as you can about the sequence of events and fill in details of the plan as soon as you can. Frequently, as the project progresses, even the carefully spelled out steps will need further elaboration. What at first seems like a simple activity, such as arranging a community meeting, may be divided into any number of steps to assure its success. There is no substitute for careful, detailed planning on a step-by-step basis. This goes hand in hand with establishing goals and subgoals and setting up a realistic timetable of events.

Getting people to agree to participate

Much of the participation in the project may develop *after* the action phase begins. People become more aware of the activity at that point, and those who agree with its objectives may wish to play a part in its implementation. Valuable as this participation may be, getting specific people lined up during the *planning* stage and getting them to agree to carry out specific tasks is crucial.

Every community has a number of leaders who should be involved fully and very early in the process. They may be leaders because of the positions they hold in the community (e.g., mayor, newspaper editor, etc.) or because they have reputations as hard-working, civic-minded members of the

community. Beyond these rather obvious community leaders who should be involved, there are others who are equally important to the success of the project.

All segments of the community should be represented in the project if at all possible. If this is to be a community effort, then it should be broadly representative of the community. How about the young people, retired persons, someone from the German neighborhood on the north side of town, and others? In addition, there may be people who should be included because of their particular interest in, or relationship to, the project. You should make every effort to include as many subgroups as possible.

You might even consider inviting some people to participate who question the project or are actually against it. While you don't want the project scuttled before it is launched, you may find these people have some questions and concerns about the project that may help you in your thinking about how best to implement the project.

The key suggestion here is to find out who should be a part of the project and get them involved before you begin to carry out the action. If you get them to agree to specific assignments at this early stage in the process, so much the better. But be sure they know about and accept these assignments! Nothing is worse than to involve community leaders in a project in which their role is ill-defined or not defined at all. It will look to them as if the project isn't too important or their participation isn't too important or both.

If you need people to help, take the time to explain what the project is all about and what you want them to do to help make it a success. Not only should an assignment be clearly stated, but you must be sure it is built into the overall plan. Whom do they work with? Whom do they report to? What are they expected to do, and when should they be expected to complete it? Getting people to participate is not difficult if they sense the importance of the project and understand the specific task they are being asked to carry out.

Creating a communications network

Perhaps the phrase is a bit too grand for what is intended here, but good communication among those involved in the project and between the project and the rest of the community is essential. You need to coordinate the various work groups and committees, and you must communicate what each person or group is doing. One of the simplest means of communication is a periodic memorandum or newsletter reporting progress, reminding people of upcoming meetings, and indicating next steps. Such a newsletter or memo should be directed toward all those who are in any way involved in the project. They are your most important audience at this point and must be kept informed so that they are aware of how their individual efforts fit into the total effort.

Equally important are communication links with the community. In addition to seeing that your newsletter goes to selected community leaders and project workers, you will want to consider coverage in neighborhood newspapers and daily newspapers in your area. Meeting notices on community bulletin boards and information about future meetings over the local radio stations can help keep people informed. Whatever your communication plan, it should be thought through and worked out before you begin carrying out your project.

Even at best, only a small percentage of the community will be directly involved in your project. To let the entire community know what is going on and to keep your fellow workers informed, you should develop a communication plan. It can be very simple, but it should keep your two audiences—fellow workers and community members—aware of and interested in the project. Much of your success will depend on how much they

understand and support what you and others are trying to accomplish. Keep them informed and up-to-date.

Developing an organization

Whether just a few people get together to carry out a community project or a large number work through task groups, committees, and boards, you will need to establish some type of organization. Essentially, the organization is the structure that holds the various parts (committees and working groups) together and keeps the entire project coordinated and on track.

The very best advice is to keep the organization and the committee structure simple. Task groups, committees, subcommittees, and other administrative units should be developed as the need arises. Too often there is a tendency to create a large and complex organization first. The problem here is that you end up spending a considerable portion of your time filling the various positions within the elaborate structure. Not only is this not the best use of your time or the time of those you have recruited to these positions, but you may have more structure than you need or, worse than that, the wrong kind of structure.

If our warning hasn't been strong enough against too much structure, here is another matter you need to consider. Any organization requires attention and maintenance (minutes kept, meeting notices sent out, elections held, committees appointed, etc.). The larger the organization, the more time and attention needed in organizational maintenance. And the more time and effort spent on organizational maintenance, the less time and energy available to carry out the community project.

Some structure is, of course, needed. You might want to start out with a planning committee that is quite open and informal in its procedure. Planning ahead, you will want to think of the type of organization that may be needed later. This might include a board of directors, committees on publicity, finances, and building, and maybe one or two other committees. But keep in mind that most of your effort and the efforts of other members of your community should be focused on achieving your objective rather than fussing with the details of organizational maintenance. You can always add a committee if you need to; subtracting one is much harder.

The "bottom line" on organization and structure is whether the committee or task group is needed to help you reach your objective. If the answer is No, you probably will be better off without the additional administrative structure. And if you do set up a committee to carry out some task, be sure the members of it clearly understand their function and who they report to. We suggest not only that their task be put in writing but that the overall chairperson for the project meet with the committee at its first session to answer questions and make certain that their understanding of the task is complete.

These six suggestions to help you in planning the action are not intended to be absolute or complete. Other suggestions may come to you from a variety of sources. Your own past experience may help you decide how important each of these may be in planning your community project or program. The particular situation you face and the project you decide to undertake will also have an impact on how useful these suggestions are for you. It might be helpful at this point to briefly review the six suggestions.

1. Establish goals and subgoals so that you have both long- and short-range objectives to strive for.

2. Set target dates and establish a timetable for completing each step or subgoal.
3. Develop a step-by-step plan for achieving your objective. This will fit well with the subgoals and time schedule already established.
4. Get people to agree to participate. Get them to accept specific assignments, and be sure they know their assignments.
5. Create a communications network so that those involved in the project can be kept abreast of developments and the community in general can be kept informed.
6. Develop an organizational structure that is adequate, but keep it simple.

Finally, before moving on to actually carrying out the action, you might want to look over a checklist of items that will help to reassure you that your planning phase is completed and you are ready to move into action. If you think of other items that should be included on a checklist, by all means add them. It should be as complete a listing as possible, because careful planning will make any community project run more smoothly and reduce the risk of false starts, wasted motions, and dead ends.

1. Have you taken a broad look at community needs, being aware of conditions people don't like, situations that should be improved, and new activities people would like to see established?
2. Have you some "hard data" on these needs, such as how many people are affected and to what extent?
3. Have you talked to enough people in your community to feel satisfied that the need is real and generally recognized as a need by the community?
4. Have you undertaken an informal inventory of local resources that can help meet the identified need? Will these resources be available to help?
5. Have you looked beyond your community to other resources that may be called upon, including outside consultants, financial support, and organizational assistance?
6. Have you considered a number of alternative ways of responding to the need you have identified? Have you considered each alternative in terms of cost, time, feasibility, and other factors you deem important?
7. Have you and members of your community come to an agreement on *what* you plan to do; that is, have you selected a particular approach to the need, one that fits your community?
8. Have you developed a step-by-step plan for achieving your objective, including goals and subgoals and target dates for reaching each step or subgoal?
9. Have you gotten the people you need to agree to participate, and do they understand and accept their assignment?
10. Have you set up a communication plan so that you can keep both those involved in the project and the rest of the community informed?
11. Have you developed an adequate but simple organization that can serve to coordinate everyone's efforts and keep them directed toward the objective?
12. Have you and those who have agreed to work with you accepted the fact that this project may take much more time and effort than

any of you now realize? Is there a willingness to move ahead and a commitment to see the task through?

13. Have you some assurance that an appropriate community group (the city council, the parks department, a local business association, your own group . . .) will take on the "care and feeding" of the project afterwards?

If you can honestly say Yes to questions in these thirteen categories, you and the members of the community working with you have done a most thorough job of planning the action and are well on your way to achieving your community goal.

CHAPTER 5

CARRYING OUT THE ACTION

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This is the moment you have been working for . . . carrying out the action. You have "done your homework"—analyzed the needs, mustered a fine inventory of resources, laid out a detailed plan for action. Now it's only a matter of *doing*.

This is *not* the time to relax, however. Don't assume that your plan will march of its own accord. Remember that your organization or coalition is a collection of people. Focus on the people who are carrying out the tasks rather than merely the task itself, and you will be much better able to avoid the "people" problems and the communication problems that are bound to crop up.

In addition to people and communication, there are at least three action categories that you must deal with, beginning now. They are: (1) keeping the activity going, (2) maximizing the action plan, and (3) fighting fires.

KEEPING THE ACTIVITY GOING

The problems involved in keeping the activity going extend beyond such organizational maintenance activities as task forces and the "administrivia" of organizations. Keeping the activity going refers to sticking to the action plan. "The best laid plans of mice and men . . ." has become a phrase of currency in our culture for good reason.

Admittedly, the more finely detailed and well thought out a plan, the easier the action phase. However, inadequacies of data, resources, or judgment, a shift in circumstances, and just plain lack of foresight might render the plan somewhat out of step with the project as you begin to carry it out. This should not alarm you; this is normal and happens all the time. In fact, readjustment of the plan to the activity while keeping a focus on the major objectives will likely be an ongoing responsibility. The plan should not be so rigid that you cannot deviate from it, but neither should you make sweeping or substantial changes in the plan without a thorough discussion.

"Not seeing the forest for the trees" is another metaphor for becoming so present-task involved that the larger significance of the situation is lost. In the excitement and pace of carrying out the action, it is important to step back at intervals along the way and ask some important questions about the forest.

1. How does the whole project (the forest) look?
2. Are you moving through the time sequence adequately?
3. What areas are getting out of hand, i.e., moving too fast, becoming too important, taking too many resources, veering off course from stated objectives?
4. What areas need shoring up, i.e., more energy, emphasis, workers?
5. Do any of the objectives need to be eliminated and/or emphasized?

This checklist is certainly not complete, because there is no single prescription for the action phase of every project. But answering these questions will give some insight as to whether you are being sidetracked or are reasonably in step with the plan as you and your community designed it.

Carrying out the action in a community setting is in some respects similar to managing an organization in the business world. Tapping community volunteers that you can count on to get the job done is not unlike a careful hiring procedure. Maintaining the interest of your co-workers is very much like motivating in the work setting. And as you establish committees and task forces to carry out the details of the project, keep in mind that no one person can attend to a multitude of activities going on at one time and still maintain an awareness of each activity and its impact—that is, the "span of control" must be kept within reasonable limits. Delegation of responsibility is essential to avoid this problem.

Oftentimes one or two people—frequently it's the coordinator or the encourager—are tempted to do "everything" to make sure it gets done. This attitude does nothing to increase the strength of leadership in your organization; furthermore, it usually backfires and creates general apathy—even antagonism—among the workers. Remember, building a self-directing community is as important as the task at hand.

Although it was stated earlier, it deserves repeating here: The communications network is vital to the smooth functioning of any organization. People need to know what's going on and must be involved in any major decisions that either affect them or alter the course of their activity. During this action phase, when task forces and committees are busy in different places, it is essential to let people know what is happening at headquarters and what is going on in the rest of the organization. And now is the time to encourage the troops by genuine praise. This job usually falls to the coordinator, a chairperson, or the encourager.

A good point to remember, no matter *who* is doing the praising, is that the more specific the comment, the more effective will be the communication. "You did a good job" can be converted into "I liked the effectiveness with which you closed that meeting"; "You've been helpful" can be translated into "Your knowledge of the newspaper field has sure helped the publicity on this project"; and so on.

This same specificity is important in assigning activities. People have a much easier time doing something if they know what to do. Let people know exactly what is expected of them, with whom they are expected to work, and to what degree and where or in what instance they will be carrying out the same activities as someone else. Confusion about who does what frequently results in something essential being left undone. Effective planning and clear definition of the tasks to be done will eliminate this potential problem.

Any community activity is going to have both continuing supporters and dropouts. Dropouts can be minimized by careful selection and fitting of people's activities to their interests, as well as by a lot of positive feedback. If people feel or are shown that their activities are producing results, that alone

is an encouragement to continue. However, there will undoubtedly be some who will drop out because of personal priorities, family interests, or other problems, or for no good reason at all. These dropouts should not be viewed as failures but as inevitabilities. Since no human organization is static, there will be additions as well as dropouts and a constant adjusting of people to the tasks.

MAXIMIZING THE ACTION PLAN

Simply keeping the activity going, however, isn't sufficient if you're looking for success. You must be able to maximize the plan at every possible turn. Support by influential persons and/or organizations is extremely valuable, so tapping into issues important to powerful leaders and decision makers, where possible, could give you a definite advantage. Unforeseen resources in the form of platforms or concurrent issues can give your project a real shot in the arm. Don't be afraid to ally yourself with relevant issues that bring your activity to the forefront. Publicity in the form of newspaper reports or other media coverage can have a spotlighting effect.

Ideally, of course, all publicity would be positive. Unfortunately, achieving only favorable publicity cannot be guaranteed, but there are ways to turn negative press reports to your own advantage. Public debate, previously unattainable public forums, and perhaps support or endorsement from previously unidentified quarters are some of the ways you can turn a bad press to your advantage.

As your activity gains visibility and currency, it will probably draw more productive work members. You can make excellent use of them. And you should not be reluctant to use professional help whenever appropriate in order to maximize your activity. This may range from professional organizers to university personnel to public agency officials and so on.

And finally, as a sort of footnote to this section, keep in mind that there will assuredly be both positive and negative side effects or spin-offs from your activity. The negative effects will have to be worked on, of course, to minimize or eliminate them. But the positive effects can serve as seeds for new projects, new developmental possibilities, and future efforts. Don't forget to note these down for future reference as you carry out your action.

FIGHTING FIRES

There will, inevitably, be "fires" that someone will be called upon to quench. These may range from a positive idea gone out of control—such as an overenthusiastic block parent whose behavior tends toward that of the gestapo—to an ill-advised remark or a poorly quoted news article. Systematic progress is of the essence, but so is good humor and a basic compassion for your fellow human beings.

You may have to fight the fire of an unexpected reversal of support when the support that you had previously counted on turns to reluctance or downright opposition. Communication may be the problem, but more frequently you may discover unanticipated opposing interests or previously unknown sensitivities. Negative points of view are seldom entirely unfounded and therefore must be discussed and worked through. It may be that some of these people simply have questions that need answering, and they will again become supportive when those questions are answered to their satisfaction.

As for those persons who seem destined to continue to oppose your project, you *might* consider co-optation—a high-sounding term for inviting

opponents (or at least "nay sayers") into a position of responsibility for policymaking and operation (perhaps not too high a position!) where they can share in the rewards of the project and may eventually soften their position as they acquire a stake in the activity. Co-optation is much easier said than done, however, and you must look for the key that will entice this particular individual or organization into at least trying it your way. Key incentives to offer include positive press, responsibility and/or authority, public recognition, or perhaps your reciprocal cooperation in another area of common interest.

Then, of course, there are fires that call for more ingenious tactics. Although the process we are discussing in this guide is "developmental," preferring maximum acceptance and cooperation to contest and confrontation, there *are* techniques that can be borrowed from more radical organizers. Saul Alinsky's (1971) concept of "organizational jujitsu," in which you use the impetus of the organization whose support you are seeking to work for your own ends, may work for your project. For example, you might highlight your project in such a way that the recalcitrant organization would lose face in the public eye by not supporting it.

And you might also consider some of Alinsky's more subtle tactics—what could be called "attention getters." He once helped a group of students who wanted to expand their rights and privileges by proposing a strategy that would demonstrate that any privilege could be abused. Since there was no ban on chewing gum at that institution, although almost every other activity that youth enjoy was taboo, Alinsky suggested that each student deposit several pieces of well-used gum around the campus. This tactic brought the administration's attention face to face with the sticky question of responsibility in any right or privilege. Subsequent discussions involving student leaders and administrators resulted in a sharp decrease in the "careless" distribution of chewing gum *and* a considerable liberalization regarding previously banned activities.

You needn't go to such extreme ends, of course. However, it helps to consider innovative ideas that can cheaply and yet emphatically move your project ahead in effectiveness and visibility.

You may as well accept the fact that, no matter how hard you work to get unanimous support, it is a rare project that prompts no resistance at all. When you do encounter dedicated and unswaying opposition from some person(s) or group, your only recourse is probably to increase your efforts to foster support among influential citizens, groups, and the general public on behalf of your goal. After all, you and your group(s) are—or should be—just as convinced that your project is best for the community as a whole.

Now that you have read about the many roles people must play and activities that will take place as you carry out the action, you may feel that the pace is certain to be hectic and the road long and convoluted. If, however, you stick to your plan as much as possible, pay attention to your priorities, avoid becoming sidetracked, keep in mind the span of control, delegate, maintain high levels of communication, and work positively with unforeseen resources as well as resistances, you and your coalition will progress in good order toward your goal. And do remember to stop occasionally and savor your progress and, incidentally, evaluate it. In fact, whether or not you finally achieve your goal often depends on the evaluation methods you use; and that is the subject of the *next* and final chapter.

CHAPTER 6

EVALUATING YOUR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS AND RESULTS

There is one important step in the community development process that should not be overlooked, forgotten, or just ignored. It is the step that officially tells you how well you are doing, or how well you have done; this step is *evaluation*.

The evaluation step in a community development program is that part of the process where you ask yourself and others hard questions to determine how successful you have been at accomplishing your intended purposes.

The evaluation process has been surrounded by many myths, chief among them that evaluation is some high-powered and mysterious process that can be carried out only by highly trained specialists who know a lot about complex data-collection techniques, statistics, and computers. Many people assume that evaluators possess foolproof devices for use in determining the extent to which programs are successful.

The truth of the matter is that successful evaluation depends far more upon clear, accurate, and common-sense thinking than upon highly sophisticated research techniques, although there is certainly a place for advanced evaluative research methods and analysis.

Finding out whether or not a community development program accomplished what it was designed for, or being able to judge the extent or degree of success, is what evaluation is all about. Evaluation does not deal with absolutes. Rarely, if ever, is any program either a total success or a total failure. In evaluating a community development activity we are basically attempting to determine the extent to which we accomplish what we set out to accomplish and making certain judgments about the methods and processes used in conducting the program or activity. Evaluations seek to answer questions that will provide useful information to guide future decisions and actions.

One common type of program review is referred to as *process* or formative evaluation. Its purpose is to help formulate and examine the adequacy of the process used to plan and carry out a community program. Process or formative evaluations are usually performed while the program effort is going on (in process). Records are maintained and studied, observations are made, and tentative conclusions or judgments are drawn. Information developed while a program is being carried out is one important form of evaluation and provides an opportunity for making midstream corrections if the information indicates changes are needed or desired in order to accomplish planned objectives.

Another type of program review is referred to as *results* or summative evaluation. It focuses primarily on summing up the outcomes, results, or

accomplishments of a program effort. Results or summative evaluations are usually conducted either while the program is in progress or soon after it is finished, but in either case judgments about the final results or accomplishments are not made until the program is completed.

Evaluations may deal with both short-term and long-range results. Evaluations conducted by community groups usually focus on short-term results. Evaluations of long-term results (e.g., what are the consequences of a project months or perhaps years after its completion?) frequently require a greater commitment of time and resources and thus are more commonly performed by educational, government, or private organizations. Even here, however, you may well find it useful to take a close look some time later to see whether your efforts produced the long-term ends you had hoped for. (Are people using the swimming pool you worked so hard to get built? Is it being properly supervised and maintained?)

In most instances, community development programs that are carried out by a group of community citizens do not have available a person whose only purpose is to be the evaluator for the program or project. It should be emphasized that an evaluator or evaluation specialist *is not necessary* to do most of the evaluation work that needs to be done on individual community development projects. Most of the project evaluation work can be done by the same people who are involved in planning and conducting the project, although it is a task that will take up some of the time that might be spent on the action itself.

Planning the evaluation should be an integral part of planning the actual community development project. Planning for the evaluation of a community development project requires the project planner or person(s) responsible for evaluation to answer some simple and basic questions:

1. Why should you evaluate this project?
2. When should you evaluate this project?
3. How should the evaluation be done?
4. What will be done with the evaluation information once it is available?
5. Who should do the evaluation?

WHY DO PROGRAM EVALUATION? WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

We live in an age of accountability. Even the most simple community development programs require some input of time, talent, and resources. How efficiently and effectively we use the resources and what we accomplish by using the resources are basic questions to be answered in the evaluation.

Often we learn by trial and error. We try one method to accomplish our program, and if that doesn't work we try another. Using a trial-and-error method isn't all bad. As a matter of fact, many professionals use such a method, even though they may call it by some fancy name—disjointed incrementalism, for example. What we want to accomplish in program evaluation is to prevent making the same errors time after time. It should be sufficient to invent the wheel only once. Thereafter, we should learn from what we have done the first time and concentrate our efforts on improving our methods next time. One way to know what we have done, and how well we have done it, is to evaluate or measure our efforts.

Many community development programs use public funds to accomplish all or a part of their projects or activities, e.g., solid waste disposal

projects, emergency medical services, fire protection services, local government planning projects, etc. Schools, businesses, public service agencies at all levels . . . and community development groups . . . are under increasing pressure to prove that what they're doing or supporting with public funds is indeed worthwhile. Why do program evaluation? Because you must be prepared to answer such questions as "What did you do with the available resources?" "What did you accomplish with the available resources?" "Why should additional or continuing resources be made available to you?"

To best answer these types of questions requires some systematic and formal plan for gathering and analyzing information about the program. This systematic and formal plan is a program evaluation.

In addition to justifying the use of resources to accomplish planned results, there are program "process" questions that also need answers. You need to monitor what and how you are doing—what progress you are making—and to determine whether you need to change methods or ingredients as you go along through the program.

If you keep records about what you do and how you do it, you will have some basis from which to judge the degree of success that is achieved. In fact, record keeping is essential to program evaluation. How often have we heard that a key person left the job or project and the only record of what was done was "in her head and she took it along with her"; or that the person who moved on was the only one who knew the whole story about how a project was planned and conducted, and his departure meant no record was left behind for others to follow in future efforts?

Why do program evaluation? To summarize what we have said above, at least two good reasons exist: (1) it provides a means of being accountable to those who authorize and provide resources (time, talent, or money) for our programs, and (2) it furnishes a record of what was done and how it was done, a record that can be used to guide future efforts and may prevent others from making the same trial-and-error mistakes that we made.

WHEN SHOULD THE PROJECT BE EVALUATED?

Once the decision has been made to conduct a project or program and to evaluate the effort, the next logical question is "When should you evaluate this project?" Evaluating a community development effort is subject to many of the same constraints and temptations as many other activities. Community programs are usually carried out by people who are already busy and have many demands upon their time. The temptation therefore exists to put off the evaluation until later—perhaps until the program is completed or even much later than that, which may result in no evaluation at all. Care should be taken to assure that the evaluation is included as a necessary, important, and continuing part of the project.

When the evaluation should be done is a matter that needs to be planned as carefully as the other parts of the program. Alternatives do exist, depending upon the nature of the evaluation to be conducted. Mention was made earlier about the two basic types of evaluation: process evaluation and results evaluation. That two-way classification is clear, but it is presented primarily to show that one can look at the evaluation question from two entirely different perspectives. However, we do *not* encourage people carrying out community development projects to limit their evaluation efforts to *either* a process *or* a results approach. Rather, we feel it to be much more useful to include in the evaluation planning some aspects of both approaches.

Planning the evaluation is an activity that should be started at the same time that planning the program activities is started. The program planners decide at the beginning not only what they want to accomplish but also what evidence must emerge *during* the program and at the *end* of the program to indicate adequately to those who need to know that the program effort was successful or at least partially successful.

When should the project be evaluated? The answer to this question, simply stated, is that the procedures and methods used to accomplish the project, as well as the short-term results, should be evaluated during the time that the program is being carried out. This permits any desired midcourse program adjustments to be made in time to have a positive effect on the success of the program. The information provided by the evaluation serves as the basis for any changes. Thus, program changes are planned and based on sound data just as the original program is.

Certain parts of the overall evaluation intended to measure long-term results and accomplishments will have to be conducted at the beginning or even before the program is started. Most community development programs are designed to bring about some type of change in a community. For example, programs may attempt to change the attitudes of residents about school bond issues, to improve the physical appearance of a part of the town, to bring about a reform in the type of local government (e.g., charter revision), to organize residents to support development of a land fill, etc.

In order to know what impact or effect the program has had in helping to bring about the planned change, it is important to know (to have documented) where the community stood on the issue at the time the program was started. In evaluation terms, this is a "baseline measure." Baseline measures should be taken at the time planned change is started so that it will be possible to judge, at the end of the planned period, just how successful the program has been in accomplishing its goal.

To judge the impact or effectiveness of change resulting from a community development project, you should document the conditions as they exist at the beginning of the program so that you can compare them with the conditions as they exist at the end of the program. The baseline measure for an educational program to change opposition to a school bond, for example, might include a breakdown of the votes that defeated a recent school bond issue. Or to document the "before" of a community beautification program, you might take a series of photographs of your target areas.

In any case, program evaluation should begin at the time the program is being planned, continue throughout the program, and be finished at some point after the program is concluded.

HOW SHOULD THE EVALUATION BE DONE?

There is no secret formula for conducting program evaluations, nor is there any standard format to follow. Each program evaluation must be developed and tailored to fit the program and the needs of the individuals conducting the program and the evaluation. There are, however, some general guidelines that apply to almost any project.

We suggest, for one thing, that you keep anecdotal records of the decisions that are made and the process you used to make them as you move along on your project. You may wish to have the person(s) in charge of the evaluation ask questions of the groups and individuals involved in the action and write down the answers to establish a record for the project. Those queried should be encouraged to be as frank and objective as possible in

order to maximize the usefulness of the data in future projects. Among the questions that might be asked about a step or phase that is completed, or nearing completion, are:

1. Did you consider all the alternatives for this step that you should have?
2. Why did you choose the particular alternative you did?
3. What difficulties, if any, did you run into that you should have foreseen? (Did you handle them properly?)
4. What are the things you did during this step that you're especially pleased with?
5. What things did you do that you'd do differently next time?
6. Did you consult all those who *should* have been consulted, and, if you didn't, what can you do about it now?

Since step-by-step evaluation makes possible midcourse adjustments in the action, we suggest that your evaluator(s) also consider asking *at the end* of each phase such questions as:

1. Do you need to acquire more information before you take the next step? (If so, what information?)
2. Have you looked at all the alternatives that should be considered in the next step?
3. Are there others who should now be involved in your project who have not been involved up to this point?
4. Are there other and unanticipated resources you need to seek out at this time?
5. What risks do you now see, if any, and what plans should you make to cope with them if they emerge?
6. Do you now need to add another administrative unit (committee, subcommittee, task force) to your project organizations?
7. Should you modify the remaining steps you have planned, your time schedule, or perhaps even your final goal in some way as a result of what you now know?

Select from these questions, if they seem useful, and add others that you feel are appropriate, as you near or achieve each subgoal.

It might at first seem that such record keeping would be a tedious and burdensome task. However, once a routine is established, it can become quite manageable. Moreover, you will be likely to find that the technique of using questions such as the above will provide moments of reflection that will improve performance later. A word to the wise on record keeping: Notes should be recorded as soon as possible and kept up to date in order to avoid a distortion of information and, indeed, frequently a loss of information as well. Try using a tape recorder in your evaluation sessions, if you can get access to one.

The evaluator(s) can play another important role by being on the scene from the beginning and helping to make sure that the goals and subgoals are clearly stated, especially, if possible, in measurable terms. For example, if one program goal is "to remove all litter and debris from all streets in the second ward," the results can be easily and accurately measured and documented either by photographs or by having selected individuals (a team of judges) conduct an on-site inspection. If, however, the program goal is stated vaguely—"to improve the appearance of the streets in the second ward"—the expected outcome is neither clear nor easily measured, since the removal of any part of the litter and debris would satisfy the goal and may or may not actually improve the appearance of the community. It is important

to state the objectives of the program clearly, and in measurable terms if at all possible.

The example shows the close relationship between *planning the program* and *planning the evaluation*. If the program is planned carefully and specifically, the program evaluation can be a rather easy task.

In deciding how to do the evaluation, the persons in charge of program development and evaluation must answer the questions "How will I know when I've finished the job?" "What conditions will exist and in what form?" "If the program is intended to bring about some change in people's attitudes or behavior, what will program participants be doing differently or better as a result of the program?" and "How will the participants demonstrate they benefited from the program?"

In preparing program and evaluation objectives that are measurable, avoid words that are fuzzy and open to many interpretations, such as "to know," "to understand," "to really understand," "to appreciate," "to enjoy," etc. Measuring whether or not a person "appreciates" or, worse yet, "really appreciates" a program, or measuring the extent or degree of "appreciation," can be a very difficult task. The measurement or evaluation task, however, can be greatly simplified by stating the goals and objectives of the program in terms that can be measured more easily. For example, behaviors of participants that can be measured include the participants' ability "to identify," "to compare," "to write or recite," etc. Once program objectives are spelled out in terms that can be measured, the program evaluation can be planned by deciding *what evidence* must exist to indicate program success.

An example of a community beautification program might be of some value. The goals may include removal of litter, planting of shrubs and flowers, and improved citizen attitudes about the value of having a neat and attractive neighborhood. Evidence of accomplishments might include before and after photographs indicating the litter and subsequent lack of litter that exists on the streets (with a panel of judges to rate the improved appearance), the number and variety of new shrubs and flowers planted in comparison with what existed before the program, a "before" and "after" survey of attitudes of residents (using specific questions) about the value of improved community appearance, and a long-term assessment of the impact of short-term improvements that might include comparisons of real estate values in the community before and after the beautification program.

Data or information may be collected from whatever sources seem appropriate to the program. Evidence may be obtained from participants and compared with similar information from nonparticipants. You might wish to compare your community with others that did not have a project like yours. Panels of judges or experts may be asked to make judgments about quality or value of the program and its accomplishments. Community sponsors or funding agencies may be asked to render opinions or suggestions as the program is being conducted (in process) and to react to the accomplishments (results).

WHAT WILL BE DONE WITH THE EVALUATION INFORMATION ONCE IT IS AVAILABLE?

Each program evaluation must be planned according to the intended purposes or objectives of each separate program. In turn, the information that is gathered should be collected and used for planned purposes. It is a waste

of time and resources to collect evaluation information if that information is not used.

Information about short-term results should be used "to tell the story" about the program accomplishments. *If a project is worth doing, it is worth telling about.* By evaluating the program, you collect the necessary information to provide the base for developing the story. Don't be shy! Telling the story of the successes of one community improvement program may very likely motivate others to develop other programs. Progress may be defined as a collection of individual successes.

Evaluation information about long-term results may also be used "to tell the story," especially with respect to the historical record of the community. Certainly documentation of a community improvement program or community development project should be given to the local library. One word of caution for those writing community history: if your project workers were very candid in their evaluations ("the mayor was an intransigent so-and-so") you will certainly want to "formalize" the report somewhat before it becomes part of the public record.

Long-term evaluation information should also be used to improve the methods your group or coalition will use if and when you launch another project. Now is the time to figure out which of your tactics were most successful and which were least successful, and why.

And, finally, if your project was supposed to become "institutionalized," so to speak, the long-term evaluation should include some measure of its "care and feeding." For example, has the community established a regular procedure to maintain the shrubs and trees you planted? or the recreation program you started? Working yourself out of a job *must* include easing someone else into it, and the success of that phase of your plan should be included in your evaluation.

WHO SHOULD DO THE EVALUATION?

It was pointed out earlier that one does not need to be an expert to evaluate a community development program or project. Any individual who is motivated to want to help, who has the capacity to think and plan clearly, who has the ability to observe and react objectively, who has the diplomatic skills to encourage others to be frank, and who is willing to stay with the task until it is finished can certainly evaluate most community development projects successfully.

EPILOGUE

40 The six of us who have drafted this publication have devoted a major portion of our lives to working professionally with citizen groups interested in improving the communities in which they live. Sometimes we have played a major role in helping community residents carry through their projects. Sometimes we have only dropped a few suggestions and words of advice. And *sometimes* we have simply looked on, occasionally with amazement, as people have gone to work, entirely on their own, with the imagination and goodwill to succeed at what may initially have seemed to them an impossible task.

It is our hope that this guide will be useful to all three of those kinds of groups, especially that it will "lengthen the reach of our arms" to those with whom we have often been able to work only modestly, and will provide help to those who are going it alone.

We have seen abundant evidence that a better life can be achieved through positive community action. We have met many people who had the courage to say, "We can make it better," and did. We believe you can too!

OTHER SOURCES YOU MIGHT FIND USEFUL

Biddle, William W., with Loureide J. Biddle. *Encouraging Community Development: A Training Guide for Local Workers.* New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1968.

This paperback publication, though intended primarily for the training of persons such as VISTA volunteers and Peace Corps workers who may be only temporary residents of the communities that are seeking to improve the quality of life, contains many ideas that citizen groups could find useful. Many real-life experiences in community development are provided.

Cron, Rodney L. *Let's Do It Now.* Westport, Connecticut: Condor Publishing Co., Inc., 1978.

Subtitled "A Guide for the Management and Operation of Volunteer Organizations," this very practical book—a paperback—focuses more on organizational maintenance than on the conduct of community development projects. However, since it has chapters on developing a new organization and the problem of attracting and retaining volunteers, readers of our publication might find it useful.

Flanagan, Joan. *The Grass Roots Fundraising Book: How to Raise Money in Your Community.* Chicago: The Swallow Press, Inc., 1977.

This paperback product of the Youth Project (1000 Wisconsin Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20007) is not just for kids, however. It is full of ideas, with chapters on "Benefits for Beginners," "Intermediate Fundraisers," "The Big Time," and "Fund Raising Forever"—the last dealing with continuous or periodic activities rather than single events. Several good bibliographies are included.

Liebert, Edwin R., and Bernice E. Sheldon. *Handbook of Special Events for Nonprofit Organizations: Tested Ideas for Fund Raising and Public Relations.* New York: Association Press, 1972.

Contains many ideas for special fund-raising events, with "experience reports" from those who have used the events. The examples are all from well-established big-city groups with paid staff and upper-income boards and might need to be modified to fit your situation.

Poston, Richard W. *Action Now! A Citizen's Guide to Better Communities.* Carbondale and Edwardsville, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1976.

Written primarily for small towns and cities in rural America, this paperback contains ideas that can be adapted to more urban settings.

It is especially useful in its listing of information that might be sought in determining community needs. It is particularly good in detailing methods for involving the total community.

Strauss, Bert, and Mary E. Stowe. *How to Get Things Changed: A Handbook for Tackling Community Problems.* Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1974.

This publication describes the successful experience of the authors in bringing about a number of improvements in a cluster of widely dispersed suburban areas adjacent to a large city and follows it with an extensive list of how-to-do-it suggestions based on that experience.

Warren, Rachelle B., and Donald I. Warren. *The Neighborhood Organizer's Handbook.* Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977.

Based on intensive studies of fifty-nine different local neighborhoods in an urban setting, this paperback is intended for use by citizens desiring to improve life in their immediate area. It identifies six different types of neighborhoods and provides practical suggestions for determining which type a neighborhood is and how to mobilize leadership and citizen participation in each type.

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